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## United States: EPA Ruling On Sludge Gasification Process Opens Door To Environmentally Beneficial Waste Treatment Technology

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Taxpayers in municipalities looking for a sustainable alternative to costly incineration have reason to cheer. The Environmental Protection Agency recently ruled that sewage sludge gasification technology patented by MaxWest Environmental Systems Inc., is not an incinerator, heralding a major victory for clean air and water. The EPA, in a letter dated Dec. 19, determined that federal emissions guidelines and compliance rules for sewage sludge incinerators do not apply to a MaxWest sludge gasifier near Sanford, Fla.

In its findings, the EPA held that MaxWest's pioneering technology that breaks down sewage sludge through heating in an oxygen-starved environment prevents combustion, and thus will not be regulated as an incinerator. The agency further exempted from incinerator regulations the second energy-saving step in the process – a "thermal oxidizer process heater" in which gases released from thermochemical reactions are scrubbed and then burned to create heat needed to dry incoming sludge.

The result of the process is a self-sufficient closed-loop system that requires little or no fossil fuel after start-up, drastically reducing costs of and emissions from using natural gas for an incinerator.

The MaxWest process carries other environmental, commercial and economic benefits. Gasification produces a more valuable fertilizer for farmers since some of the carbon that incineration destroys remains in the solid byproduct. And, as space in landfills becomes scarce and motor fuel costs climb, the costs of hauling and disposing of sludge in them have skyrocketed. MaxWest's gasification technology also eliminates air and groundwater pollution risks that landfill disposal of sludge poses.

MaxWest is in negotiations to deploy its technology in several municipalities across the United States.

December's EPA ruling is not the first time the agency has cast a vote of confidence in MaxWest's technology. In a June 2012 report, the EPA extolled the benefits of its gasification process for its emissions control and green energy benefits and singled out MaxWest as the only domestic gasification technology ready for prime time.

*The content of this article is intended to provide a general guide to the subject matter. Specialist advice should be sought about your specific circumstances.*

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